



Kelly Patrick says she felt lucky that her widowed 89-year-old mother, Vivian, was living at Rehoboth Elder Care Home.

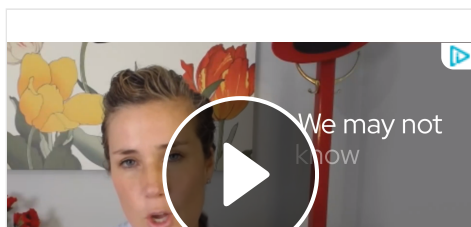
Then came COVID.

Earlier this month, provincial health officials publicly reported a COVID-19 outbreak at the privately-owned Saskatoon facility. It's one of a string of care homes in Saskatchewan recently affected by the virus, after months in which the province managed to keep care homes largely COVID-free.

"We've had 20 cases in a long-term care facility in the last several months," Saskatchewan's chief medical health officer, Dr. Saqib Shahab, said on Tuesday. "Now, in one month, we've had 13 confirmed cases."

By late Thursday, the number had grown to 17, according to the Ministry of Health.

At least four Rehoboth residents have recently tested positive for the virus, according to the home. Some remain isolated in their rooms, while others who needed to be hospitalized might return to the home once cleared.



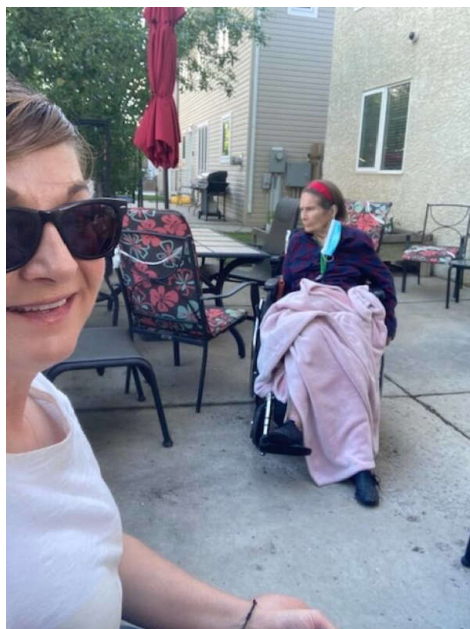
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room nurse tested negative for COVID-19. But that didn't stop her children from pulling her out of the home, even though she requires extended care.

"Given what we've witnessed in the last couple of months and just the line of communication, even finding doctors, it's been really t Vivian's daughter, Kelly Patrick, said Wednesday.



© Kelly Patrick Kelly Patrick takes a selfie with her mother Vivian in the background in the backyard of the care home.

Kelly cited high staff turnover at the home dating back several months, among other concerns.

At one point during the outbreak, "my sister had to make food for all of the home care residents because there was no staff," she said.

Kelly said her mother went 10 days without a bath — a claim the care home denies, along with any suggestion the family was obligated to provide food.

The family's concerns go beyond the seniors home, however.

Kelly said efforts to get answers from Saskatchewan public health representatives have left the family frustrated.

She said the family — which had heard whispers from care home staff about a potential COVID exposure — was looking to the province for official information about the outbreak, contact tracing and plans to test to Vivian after the outbreak was declared on Nov. 9.

Two days later, the family received a letter from the Saskatchewan Health Authority confirming COVID-19 cases at the home were being investigated after people were exposed there from Nov. 4 to 9. Contacts of

Kelly said the letter, which listed the 811 health line for anyone seeking more information, was "uninformative, elusive and vague" and that, following her reaching out further, "a bureaucrat from Saskatchewan Health" called her the next day.

"She told me that, as [Rehoboth is] a private home, Saskatchewan Health is not responsible. I was flabbergasted," Kelly said.



'We have everything covered,' home says

Rehoboth Elder Care Home sits inconspicuously amid other suburban two-storey homes in Saskatoon's Willowgrove neighbourhood.

It is a privately owned facility, but like over 250 other personal care homes in the province, it is licensed and monitored by the Saskatchewan government.

An inspector from the Ministry of Health visits each private home at least once a year to make sure people are being adequately cared for. Since 2015, inspection results have been posted online in a searchable public registry.

Leanne Mollier, a care aid who was called in to help at Rehoboth amidst the outbreak, said an inspector came by the home twice in the last week.

"We have everything covered," Mollier said of those inspections. "He didn't voice any concerns."



© Chanss Lagaden/CBC Rehoboth Elder Care Home is located in Saskatoon's Willowgrove neighbourhood.

Staff are regularly cleaning "hot spots" such as doorknobs and light switches, and a private sanitation crew goes through rooms two to three times a week, Mollier said.

face shields, gowns and gloves, she said.

Homes are also required to stagger meal times or, in the case of larger facilities, deliver food to residents' rooms to prevent overcrowding, the health ministry said in an emailed statement.

The ministry added it is securing "infection control support" for personal care homes and other group homes.



Scramble for new staff

Rehoboth typically houses up to 15 people, including patients with dementia. The home was down to four residents on Wednesday, after families like the Patricks removed their loved ones, Mollier said.

"Some people were a little bit obviously scared of the situation and they said [that] they were comfortable taking their family members home until the results and everything and until everybody was cleared."

When the outbreak occurred, the home's regular staff had to go into two-week isolation, and the manager was "scrambling to get new staff," Mollier said.

The home currently has enough staff for its four patients and feels supported by the Ministry of Health, she said.

"I am overwhelmed at how co-operative and how helpful they have been," Mollier said. "They're offering us any help that we need."



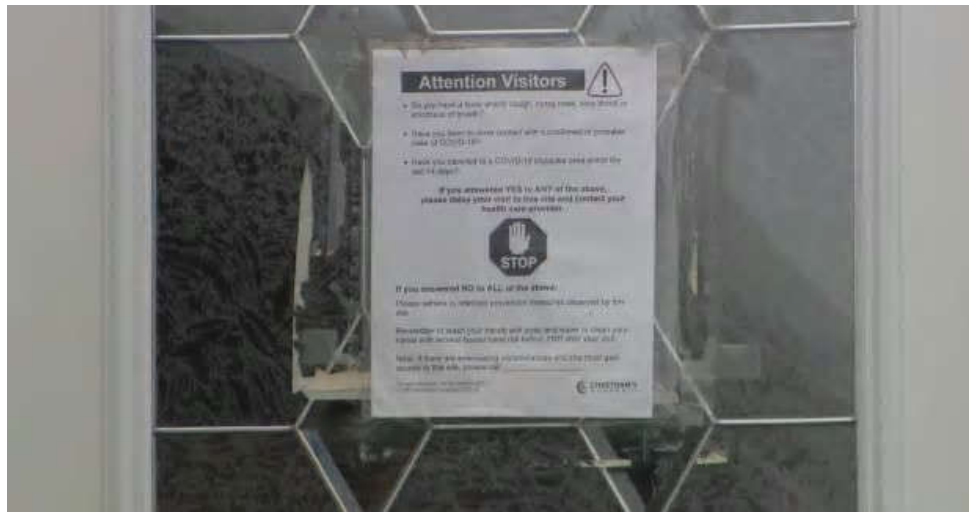
Care home manager 'taking a breather'

While Kelly Patrick said her family has been very supportive of the care home manager, she also cited concerns with the care home manager having simultaneously worked at a hospital.

In April, in an effort to reduce the potential spread of COVID-19, the Saskatchewan government ordered care homes to restrict the movement of staff members "by ensuring that each staff member works in only one facility."

The order was meant in part to prevent hospital workers from also working at personal care homes, though employers could seek exemptions "based upon operational requirements."

The ministry, in its emailed statement, said it is working with the Saskatchewan Health Authority "to ensure staff are cohorted to minimize staff from working in more than one facility."



© Chanss Lagaden/CBC A sign at on the front door of Rehoboth Elder Care Home asks visitors to follow public health restrictions.

Mollier said the manager only conducted office work, did not interact with residents and still wore a gown, mask and face shield.

"She is taking a breather," Mollier said of the manager's current status at the home.

CBC News has reached out to the manager for comment.

Mollier said staff at Rehoboth are doing everything they can to keep people safe.

"Most of the residents here have dementia, so they're not quite sure what's going on, so that's a little hard," Mollier said. "The ones that are of clear mind, they're upset about it, but they understand what's going on and they're trying to go by the rules that we are setting just to keep them safe and try to keep them as happy as you can."

Headed to a new home

As of Thursday, visits to all public and private care homes in Saskatchewan were suspended, except for those visiting for compassionate reasons outlined by the province.

Shahab said the restrictive measures are needed "to protect the most vulnerable."

"This is just a reflection of high transmission rates in the community," he said. "Staff, visitors can unintentionally bring it in."

The Patricks aren't risking that scenario.

On Thursday, Vivian Patrick boarded a plane for Toronto, then Ottawa, where she'll stay with family and have to self-isolate for 14 days — a fact the family learned only 20 minutes after the first flight, according to Kelly Patrick.

"Mom's tough," Kelly said. "She has been a trooper."

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